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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews and summarizes research studies in writing and related language areas that help educators to understand how writing is socially based. The purpose of the paper is to cast classroom practice in the variously dim and gleaming lights of research and theory, linking practice, research, and theory by looking with a close-up lens at the ways in which writing and other language experiences inside and outside of school have been studied and explained. Using this lens, the paper first presents some theoretical perspectives on written language acquisition and development. Next, the paper reviews studies that investigate social contexts for writing development both in school and out. The paper then looks at studies of instructional practices in writing that are, from lesser to greater degrees, socially based. The paper concludes with a presentation of some "core concepts" which capture the ways in which some of the most promising instructional practices in writing are linked to social theories. Ten notes are included; 213 references are attached. (Author/RS)

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Stanford University, Stanford, CA

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The Social Nature of Written Text: A Research-Based Review and Summary of Conceptual Issues in the Teaching of Writing

This paper is a review and summary of research studies in writing and related language areas that help us to understand how writing is socially based. My purpose for this paper is to cast classroom practice in the variously dim and gleaming lights of research and theory, linking practice, research, and theory by looking with a close-up lens at the ways in which writing and other language experiences inside and outside of school have been studied and explained. Using this lens, I first present some theoretical perspectives on written language acquisition and development; next, I review studies that investigate social contexts for writing development both in school and out; I then look at studies of instructional practices in writing that are, from lesser to greater degrees, socially based. I end by presenting some "core concepts" which capture the ways in which some of our most promising instructional practices in writing are linked to social theories.

The Social Roots of Written Language Acquisition and Development

> Writing . . . depends on absences--which come to the same thing as artificiality. I want to write a book which will be read by hundreds of thousands of people. So, please, everyone leave the room. I have to be alone to communicate. Let us face the utter factitiousness of such a situation, which can in no way be considered natural or even normal. (Walter Ong, 1980, p. 220)

Romantic visions of lonely and solitary writers creating *oeuvres* in the company of cats and coffee notwithstanding, writing is a profoundly social act. It is the act of exercising a voice, which is constructed out of experience in the social world, in a fundamentally social context. Writing is, furthermore, a context-*shaping* act, for when

individuals "exercise a voice in context," they contribute to the content and character of that context. As a social construct, writing is, then, much like speaking, and while much research exists on the differences between spoken and written language (e.g., Chafe, 1982; Olson, 1977; Ong, 1980), there is an emerging conviction that the two are more alike than different (Chafe & Tannen, 1987). In fact, much of what we understand about the ways in which writing, or written language, is acquired and developed has long been informed by our observations regarding spoken language and its acquisition and development.

Bruner (1978) addresses the social and contextual nature of spoken language and cites the contributions made by linguistic philosophy (e.g., Austin, 1962; Grice, 1975) to our full understanding of what is entailed in the language acquisition process. This philosophy tells us that linguistic utterances cannot be analyzed apart from the contexts in which they occur, and context is largely composed of speakers' intentions and their interlocutors' interpretations of these intentions. So, for instance, when a child hears "Why don't you play with your doll now" (Bruner's example), she must, in order to fully understand and respond to this question, place it in a *situational context,* for example, that she often finds amusement in playing with her doll, that she has not played with her doll yet that day, that her mother believes all other play options have been exhausted, and that now is the right time for such play. In doing so, the child can discover a *linguistic context* that shapes the meaning of the words, "why don't you." If the child replies "ok," she communicates acquiescence not only to doll-play but to what such play means in the full social context of which mother and child are a part at the moment. Learning to communicate through language, then, means learning that strings of words have not only explicit referents but also implicit intentions; meaning is shaped by both. In this sense, the language acquisition process is intrinsically dialogic: language implicates context, and language context is constituted in large part by speakers and audience in particular relationships to one another.

There is ample evidence in both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic research to support this premise that learning and developing skill in language derive from the

dialogic and "constructive" processes that inhere in the social setting (Cazden, 1983; Cook-Gumperz, 1979; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Dyson & Freedman, 1991; Freedman, et al., 1987; Garvey, 1984; Wells, MacLure, & Montgomery, 1979). There is a general consensus in the psycholinguistic literature that children find out how well their language is working when they find out how well they are understood by others, which is to say, when they interact in contexts in which they receive feedback or response to what are, in essence, their emerging "hypotheses" about language, its structure, and its function (Clark & Clark, 1977). Language concepts, from lexical structure to discourse genre, are dynamically shaped by the verbal and nonverbal cues exchanged between novice and responding expert--for example, between child and parent, student and teacher, peer and more knowledgeable peer.

Halliday's (1975) study of his young son's language development provides a succinct illustration of this situated interaction. Halliday describes, for example, how his young son carried out the complex task of developing a brief narrative after watching a goat attempt to eat the lid of a garbage can:

> Nigel: try eat lid
> Father: What tried to eat the lid?
> Nigel: try eat lid
> Father: What tried to eat the lid?
> Nigel: goat . . . man said no . . . goat try to eat lid
> (hours later)
> Nigel: goat try eat lid . . . man said no. (p. 112)

Nigel was not a solitary player in creating this narrative account. It was the interaction with his father that enabled him to produce narrative structure as, together, he and his father built the kinds of predications (Who/Goat try eat lid) that acceptably comprise a story and make it understandable to someone other than the storyteller himself. In such interaction, Bruner (1978) says that parents play two roles. They play the roles of "scaffold" and of "communicative ratchet" (p. 254). As

"scaffolds," they provide a support structure for the child's building of meaning through devices such as modeling expected dialogue; as "communicative ratchets," they prevent the child from sliding back once he has made a linguistic step forward by assuming that he will go on with the next construction.

That language acquisition and development are dynamic social processes has strong theoretical roots in the work of cognitive psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978), who linked language acquisition to the development of thought. Vygotsky asserted that what begin in the social context as actively constructed verbal and nonverbal interactions between a child and others (witness Halliday's interaction with his son) are internalized by the child as the raw material of reflective thought. The process of using language to communicate with others--as in the fully realized story that Nigel delivered to his father after their initial interactions--may be said to be the "re-externalization" of this internalization process. To be understood, however, such language must contain linguistic devices that make private language accessible to others, as Nigel's conversation illustrates. In Nigel's case, a key linguistic device that availed his speech to the outside world was the explicitly marked agent, "goat," of the action "lid-eating." In eliciting "goat" from Nigel, his father modeled listener expectations for what constitute clear linguistic messages. In making "goat" explicit for his father, Nigel, we assume, began to differentiate between himself as audience of his thoughts and others as audience, a key moment in Nigel's communicative development.

While this differentiation process is central to all communication, it is perhaps critical to distinguishing spoken communication from written (on this point, see Heath & Branscombe, 1985). Speakers have before them the audiences of their messages, who monitor them, give cues as to whether or not the messages are being understood, supply portions of the speaker's messages themselves, and indeed through this feedback help to construct those messages as they unfold (Gumperz, 1982). Writers have no such help, no such overt relationship with their interlocutors. Yet while writers must compose messages to absent others and, in effect, communicate to persons who cannot hold up their end of the "conversation," implicit

in written text is just such writer-reader interaction. Since writers do not produce in a social vacuum, when we talk about writers and writing, we must talk in the same breath about readers and reading. Like speaking, writing travels a two-way street.

The Social Quality of Written Texts

It is said that there is an inherent conversationality in writing (Rubin, 1988). Reflected in this statement are the social origins of language discussed earlier. One might say that in every text, whether it be a letter to a friend or an academic paper written to a community that one has not actually met, one's past and future conversational partners lurk. And learning to write means learning to anticipate that one's words will be read, that one's writing has links to someone else's understanding (Brandt, 1990).

The writer-reader relationship which underlies written text has been discussed from a number of perspectives: researchers, for example, speak of reader-writer "intersubjectivity" (e.g., Brandt, 1990), reader-writer "reciprocity" (e.g., Nystrand, 1986), the "complementarity of premises" between readers and writers (Rommetveit, 1974), or the reader-writer "transaction" (Rosenblatt, 1989). What these perspectives have in common is the premise that writers write in anticipation of readers' expectations for what written text looks like, how it is structured, how it functions, how it means. Readers read on the assumption that writers anticipate and fulfill such expectations (Nystrand, 1986). Furthermore, written text communicates not only because a writer has a sense of the reader and a reader of the writer, but, as in the unending yet diminishing images in pairs of facing mirrors, a writer has a sense of the reader's sense of the writer and so on, in infinite regression. Written text is a rich and subtle fabric created of a writer's and a reader's mutual weaving (Sperling, 1990b).

In satisfying what a reader needs to know, writers must invoke a linguistic gamut (Tannen, 1985). What and how much information to put in or leave out

(topic), for example, or how to structure information in the form of sentences (syntax), how to join one bit to another (cohesion), what discourse conventions to follow (genre), all require implicit knowledge about readers' expectations based on the cognitive and social contexts in which that reading will function (see, e.g., Applebee, 1978; Flower, 1979). Witness the converging assumptions that writers make of readers in as brief a stretch as a sentence. Whether I write "I yearn for a red hat" or "the red hat is what I yearn for" depends on the assumption that I make about my reader's prior knowledge of the existence of a red hat. I know my reader will process "the red hat" more easily if there is a prior reference to "red hat" in the text. She will process "what I yearn for" more easily if it is understood already from prior textual information that I yearn for something. My reader will probably suspend belief that real prior knowledge is necessary if the context for the writing is fiction rather than nonfiction.[1] That a piece of writing is fiction or nonfiction is, itself, a socially derived agreement concerning the functions of discourse and the text conventions that signal different discourse functions.

Critical for pedagogy is the question of how and where writers get information about these socially derived agreements, information that enables them to imagine potential readers and to put themselves in the position of these readers in order to communicate in writing. For while it may be a universal of discourse that writers and readers work in relationship to one another, the major underlying assumption of written communication is that writers and readers inhabit together a compatible cognitive and social space, a space that enables their holding in common implicit knowledge about the structure and function of written text, a space that shapes and is shaped by both prior and emerging linguistic agreements about written language. That is, the critical underlying assumption of written communication is that writers and readers inhabit what is often called a *discourse community* (see, e.g., Bartholomae, 1985).

One could say that virtually all of writing pedagogy, as well as research on the teaching and learning of writing, has revolved around the issue of shaping students to be bona fide members of discourse communities that are relevant to the school,

as the school represents the broader mainstream culture. This central issue is implicit in a range of instructional concerns, from teaching students "correct" and conventional language forms to helping them to manipulate and influence reading audiences in different academic contexts. Further, the central issue in this shaping process seems to be how best to incorporate as a writer the absent other, the reader, for whom one is writing. A problem for a growing number of students in assuming this writer's role is that many of our instructional approaches have, though often unwittingly, supposed for all students a prior social foothold in the discourse communities sanctioned by the schools.

Think, for example, of rulebook, or "formalist," pedagogy, which stresses the memorization of the formal features of grammar and usage, a pedagogy best enacted by teachers who already know the rules to students who also, at some level, already know the rules (Fulkerson, 1990; Hartwell, 1985; Weaver, 1979). This pedagogy is characteristic of, though not limited to, writing instruction that values the product (the text) over the processes of producing it (see Applebee, 1981), a pedagogy in which what "counts" as learning is the safe arrival, not the vicissitudes of the trip. Yet, think too of process-oriented pedagogy influenced anew by the discipline of rhetoric (Fulkerson, 1990), and a recent criticism levied against it (Anderson, Best, Black, Hurst, Miller, & Miller, 1990) that a process approach to writing instruction that emphasizes the writer's rhetorical analyses of discourse purpose and audience drives a limited vision of literacy: a vision that assumes of students an established conversance in the "social subtexts" of the discourse communities in which they are attempting to gain equality (p. 31).

To help tease apart such issues as they relate to effective writing instruction, the rest of this paper is devoted to the following: (a) an overview of representative research into the processes by which writers learn to address absent readers, focusing on the links between social environments and learning to write; (b) consideration, using that perspective, of key research on the teaching and learning of writing, including a look at different classroom models for writing instruction; and (c) a discussion of "core concepts" about writing acquisition and development, along with

illustrative instructional practices, helping us see how writing may become, for a range of students in a range of classrooms, a repository of skills, a communicative tool, and a resource for learning that helps place all students in the center of the school's discourse community.

The Social Environments of Learning to Write

Social Exchange in the Home and Community: Implications for School Writing

In a range of cultural settings, writing and literacy skills are seen to develop within the ordinary interactions of daily life. It appears that individuals develop literacy skills because such skills are functional within the homes and communities in which they live and work. For children, early literacy development can be facilitated in this natural uptake of reading and writing into the social fabric of their lives (Farr, 1985). However, such uptake does not always match what is valued in the schools. Two contrasting examples from research in this area should illustrate this point. In both, individuals incorporate writing with other social activities as a means toward forging and maintaining social relationships with others. And in both, contexts for writing are defined, in large part, by these relationships.

Gundlach, McLane, Stott, and McNamee's (1985) case studies of preschool age children learning to write provide windows into emergent writing processes functional in a mainstream, middle-class context. Jeremy, a four year old who wrote "all the time" (p. 5), provides an example. Jeremy lived in a home described as language and literacy rich, filled with books and magazines. His parents, both academics, frequently wrote as well as read. Most of Jeremy's writing was "pretend writing" as, in various contexts of play, he put pencil to paper and made marks as if he were composing. These pretend writings were socially derived--that is, on the basis of Jeremy's observations of family writing contexts, they were vehicles through which he "hypothesized" about the mechanics and function of real writing as he took

pencil to paper and made marks. More important, perhaps, they carried social currency. In playing "ABC News," for example, Jeremy scribbled letters and letterlike figures on pieces of paper and, in the role of newscaster, held onto his papers and made newslike announcements ("This is the ABC News! Now we have lots of weather!" p. 13) to his mother, who played the role of the viewing audience. In playing "police" with his mother, for another example, Jeremy took the role of chief, which required him to write down, with himself as the audience for his writing, the pretend messages that his mother, the "police girl," received on the telephone. According to the authors, Jeremy's goal in both games was not simply to produce a written message, but to use the message to further his pretend play. Jeremy also used writing in less audience-directed ways but in ways that, as did other play activities in his home, carried social currency. In a frequent game, Jeremy was to get something done by the time his mother counted to a certain number, such as get into the bathtub by the time she counted four. To this play routine Jeremy added a variation in which his mother had to write the word "pencil" before he put his shirt on. In sum, writing occurred in the context of play and was an activity that, as Gundlach et al. point out, both "shaped and expressed" the parent-child relationship.

One may easily speculate on the link of this early literacy play to Jeremy's construction of the kind of writer-reader relationship that is seen to undergird mature written text, for the hypothetical "other" to whom mature writers devote their attentions was very much a presence for this preschooler. Jeremy *directly addressed* this other when he communicated in writing to a parent who was "available, responsive, supportive, and appreciative" (Gundlach et al., p. 22), as when he wrote and delivered the ABC news; and he *indirectly invoked* this other when he communicated in writing to a pretend but familiar presence, for example, when he wrote notes to himself in the guise of police officer.[2] In relationship with familiar others and in the context of play, Jeremy had his first contact with a community of readers as he played "with the tools and materials of writing, the structures and formats of written language, and the social and cultural roles of writers and readers" (p. 55). These roles matched in many respects those reportedly valued in the schools,

with written text developing as an independent means of communication created through the ingenuity and communicative intent of the individual writer.

As indicated at the beginning of this section, different home and community environments are differentially conducive to establishing writing processes and abilities as they tend to be needed and valued in the schools. Heath's (e.g., 1982a, 1982b, 1983) ethnographic study of literacy in the Piedmont Carolinas provides the contrasting example and strong evidence that, while literacy develops in a range of cultural environments, there are many literacies, and they differ along with the environments in which they function.

For a period of ten years, Heath studied three southern communities, white working-class, black working-class, and white middle-class, and found essential to all three the "literacy events" that occurred daily both in and out of school. Heath defines "literacy event" as an "occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath, 1982b, p. 93). However, she found in the nonmiddle-class communities that literacy events often "contradict(ed) such traditional expectations of literacy as those taught in school" (p. 94). For example, in the black working-class community that Heath calls Trackton, "children's early spontaneous stories were not modeled on written materials" (p. 96) but on adult oral models which utilized both verbal and nonverbal elements. Further, integral to the telling of such stories was the active participation of both storyteller and audience; story outcomes were known only as they unfolded through joint creation. In this community, reading, too, was a social event. Individual silent reading without oral explanation was regarded as "unacceptable, strange, and indicative of a particular kind of failure, which kept individuals from being social" (p. 98). For adults, while writing was often limited to filling in forms, even such writing depended on a social arena as, for example, employers filled in information on employees' credit forms after such information was first negotiated orally in conversation between employer and employee. At church, brief written text was but the springboard for long sermons that took shape in conjunction with the congregation's interactive oral participation. At home, in the workplace, and at

church, writing was, for adults as well as for children, a social occasion supplemented and reinforced by the spoken and nonspoken language of multiple participants. As Heath points out, in schools, where an individual's written product is traditionally valued over the joint production of a group, and where oral and written language events are separate and distinguishable, literacy as it is constructed in Trackton holds questionable utility.

There are, however, nonmainstream literacies that function in concert with the schools in nonmainstream cultures. These provide evidence of another sort, not only that literacy is constructed in a social context but that critical to school success is a match between literacy as it is constructed at home and in the community and literacy as it is assumed to have been constructed prior to the time one entered school. A recent study by Fishman (e.g., 1990) of literacy among the Amish shows how parent-child and sibling-sibling interaction promotes writing as writing functions in the Amish community; writing is constituted by skills such as encoding of text, copying, following format, listing, and selecting text content that is acceptable to the Amish way of life. These same abilities are functional in the Amish schools; that is, copying, following format, and so on "count" as writing in these school settings and are rewarded. Similarly, critical reading, individual analysis, and interpretation of written text are not functional within the Amish culture, being "potentially divisive [and] counterproductive" (p. 36); they are not processes constructed at home and such skills have no currency in Amish schools. According to Fishman (1990),

> Equally irrelevant in Old Order schools is the third-person formal essay--the ominous five-paragraph theme--so prevalent in mainstream classrooms. Amish children never learn to write this kind of composition, not because they are not college-bound but because the third-person singular point of view assumed by an individual writer is foreign to this first-person-plural society; thesis statements, topic sentences, and concepts like coherence, unity, and emphasis are similarly alien. (p. 37)

Interactions in the schools can either positively or negatively reinforce the kinds of home interactions through which children construct themselves as writers and readers. For example, Michaels (1986), in a detailed study of "sharing time" among first graders in a mixed-ethnicity classroom, showed that the conversational give-and-take around sharing time could be an unwitting precursor to the kind of topic presentation and elaboration often valued in written academic discourse such as exposition. Take, for example, the following sharing time exchange from Michaels' study in which the student presented a topic and the teacher helped the student to construct an elaboration:

> Student: When I was in day-camp we made these candles. . . .
> Teacher: That's neato. Tell the kids how you do it from the very start. (p. 105)

In sharing time, students were, in effect, weaving spoken texts, receiving immediate feedback from the teacher, feedback that helped shape their "compositions" in ways often encountered when writing. In this classroom, problems arose when the teacher, who was white, tried to interact with black students whose discourse styles did not parallel hers and so did not invite the kind of conversational give-and-take that shapes topic presentation and elaboration. Michaels concluded that the result of such mismatch in oral styles was that students differentially experienced the kind of preparation for literacy that is often embedded in the ordinary intercourse of common classroom activities.

Social Exchange in the Classroom: Implications for Learning to Write

There are relatively few "contextual" studies of the relationship between social exchange and writing in the setting of the classroom (see Durst, 1990), yet those that exist support the premise that literacy is facilitated when writing is taken up as part of the broader social fabric. In the classroom, however, where writing tends to be

an end in itself and not a means to an end (Farr, 1985), the social aspects of writing activity are often "incidental" to the explicit curriculum. Dyson's (e.g., 1987, 1988a, 1988b, 1989) work in this area is exemplary. For a period of two years, Dyson observed an ethnically mixed combined kindergarten/first- and first/second-grade classroom in an urban magnet school, focusing on children's interactions and text productions during "journal writing" time, a frequently occurring event in this classroom when children sat together at tables and produced collections of pictures, drawn with crayons, and stories, written to accompany the pictures. Dyson's findings have profound theoretical and practical implications regarding the role of social interaction in school as children learn to write. Dyson found that key to journal writing time was the spontaneous talk that occurred between the children as they were producing their journals. Through their spontaneous conversations, children unwittingly monitored their own and each other's drawing and writing ("How long is that story," "I'll make a different story. I don't want people to think I copied off you" [1988b]). In addition, through conversation, they collaboratively imagined story plots during the process of writing them, as in the following exchange:

Jake:	I'm gonna make a mechanical man.
Manuel:	A mechanical man? You mean a robot man?
Jake:	Yeah. I'm gonna make a robot man. . . . It's gonna explode. It hasn't even exploded yet. When it does--
Manuel:	I hope it explodes in the next century. (1988b, p. 241)

Among Dyson's findings: The children's stories that included peer friends or relatives as characters served to shape those friendships and clarify family relationships (1988b); conversation about fictionalized friends and activities helped children negotiate the boundaries between fact and fancy, real worlds and imagined worlds (1988a); conversation often supplemented written text by providing the explanation or description that "rounded out" a story (1987), yet such spoken supplementation to written messages decreased over time as text itself came to carry

the message load (1989). While the informal interactions that Dyson observed were "incidental" to the curriculum goal to produce pictures with text, they were, in fact, central to the children's writing processes and products and to their developing sense of themselves as writers. In essence, the interactions embodied present others with whom the children could discover and negotiate the writer-reader relationship.

It can be argued that Dyson observed an unusual classroom, one that was flexible enough to allow children to chat as they worked. Yet her findings regarding the role of social interaction when students write in school corroborate studies of more traditional classrooms where the social imperative manifests itself in less sanctioned ways. Where writing consists of individual "seatwork" such as filling in worksheet forms or writing short answers to teacher-determined questions, students are bound by context to limited roles and responsibilities in the writing process (see Florio & Clark, 1982). Yet, outside the formal curriculum, when students write informal notes and letters to one another, they do so on the basis of their own needs to communicate. In these cases, the social dynamic has been observed to play a major role in students' writing processes as students actively construct together the purpose and audience of their messages (Clark & Florio, 1981; Dyson, 1988; Florio and Clark, 1982; Hudson, 1988). (Ironically, neither teacher nor students in such classes usually view these spontaneous communications as "writing" when asked to comment on the kinds of writing that students do in the classroom.)

In sum, interactions in the social setting, whether in or out of school, centrally facilitate the writer's construction of the "absent other." Reflected in the ordinary exchange between children and parents or peers, indeed, in the ordinary exchange between children and teachers (witness the sharing time chitchat that unwittingly shaped literate discourse in the classroom which Michaels studied), the literate "meat" of interaction is often implicit, hidden within the more salient business at hand. The pedagogical question that surfaces from these observations of written language use in context is how best in the explicit medium of instruction to exploit the often implicit meetings of writer with reader.

Exploiting Social Exchange: Writing Pedagogy

Compatible with the ideas that this paper has been developing, that writing centrally entails the writer's dependence on "the absent other," numerous studies have examined the role of those who "stand in" for that other, of those who give writers at least an approximation of the kind of online feedback that speakers get from their very present interlocutors. Central to these studies are two assumptions: (a) whereas individuals acquire and develop spoken language primarily in natural learning environments--that is, at home, in interaction with parents and with others--written language is acquired and developed primarily in the formal learning environment of the school; yet (b) just as speakers learn whether they are communicating effectively by testing their hypotheses about language structure and function with responsive others in natural settings, so students may learn about the communicative effectiveness of their written messages through response or feedback in instructional settings.

Response Narrowly Construed: Written Comments on Student Papers

A narrow construal of response to writing grows from, but is not limited to, traditionally conceived writing classrooms from elementary school through college. The traditional classroom reflects a familiar instructional scenario: The teacher assigns a writing task, for example asking students to write an essay or story on a given topic or theme; students write the essay or story, either in class or at home; on the assigned due date, students turn in their written products to the teacher; away from the classroom, the teacher reads the students' work "with a red pen," writing comments and marking errors. Often these written comments refer to grammatical rules or discourse conventions that the student is presumed either to know already from classroom lessons or to be able to look up in a composition handbook or textbook ("run-on sentence," "slang," "thesis needed," "transitions missing"). We also know this activity of marking papers as "correcting," a name that implicates the

teacher as healer, the student as patient, the writing as illness to be remedied or righted (see Hull, 1987).[3] The problem for classrooms is that, given the methodology of correcting, tantamount to a wartime search-and-destroy mission, students are often not "corrected" as the teacher expects (Sperling & Freedman, 1987), and students, especially those who come from backgrounds in which language and literacy patterns veer from middle-class standards, often find that they carry with them throughout their school years the baggage of overgeneralized and underassimilated rules for writing that have translated into bloodied papers throughout their schooling (Bartholomae, 1985; Rose, 1989; Shaughnessy, 1977). According to recent studies by Hull and Rose (1990), students at the community college level who are still considered remedial or at-risk regarding literacy development often demonstrate a lifelong pattern of misconstruing not only sentence level rules (for example, "don't begin sentences with 'and'") but critical discourse level rules as well (one student's misapplication of the caveat not to plagiarize, for instance, was seen to severely distort the process of utilizing source material for writing an expository essay).

Study after study has demonstrated the inefficiency inherent in more traditional classrooms when teachers rely on responding to student writing by writing formulaic comments on their papers. Such comments have been shown often to be so facile and vague as to be interchangeable from text to text, to be, essentially, "rubber-stamp" markings--"be specific," "clarify this" (Sommers, 1982). They have been seen to function more to justify a grade than to help the student improve writing skill (Sommers, 1982). They have been seen to carry meaning for the teacher but not for the student, even when teachers painstakingly tailor them to individual students in carefully framed language (Butler, 1980). Often, students have been seen to discount the value of written comments because they find them to reflect not their own writing weaknesses but their teachers' "confused readings" of their papers (Hahn, 1981). And for nontraditional students, papers marked heavily with cryptic comments are said to confirm what they have suspected of themselves throughout school--that they are not smart enough to write the papers that will get them through their course

work (see, e.g., Shaughnessy, 1977).

As indicated, the pedagogy of using written response to give feedback to student writing is rooted in a traditional instructional paradigm, but this is a paradigm that holds strong sway even today (Applebee, 1981, 1984; Langer, 1984). This response pedagogy also carries over to classrooms in which the traditional product approach to teaching has given over to process orientations in which the operations of generating ideas, planning writing strategies, drafting, revising, and editing all receive attention. Even in such classrooms, there seems an uncanny persistence in students to misunderstand the written responses they receive on their papers. In a study of the nature and use of response to writing in high school classrooms chosen for their excellence and cutting-edge writing pedagogy, written comments on papers were seen often to be misconstrued even when they were addressed to high-achieving students who wrote with skill and relative ease (Sperling, 1985). In a case study of one very able student's reading of her teacher's written comments on her paper, Sperling and Freedman (1987) looked more deeply into the context of written comments and found that the written comment itself occasions a literacy event that encompasses a special writer-reader relationship. In the act of reading and interpreting written comments on their papers, students draw only partly on their store of factual information about writing, and only partly on their developed writing skills; they also draw on their underlying values regarding writing and the purposes of writing in school. It is these values, as much as information and skill, that can determine how students will read and interpret the comments written on their papers. The case study student was seen to be so bound by the belief that the teacher is always right, that she often suspended her own judgment regarding her teacher's comments, often reading into them a rationale for their being unassailable.

Given the theoretical premise that writing is a socially constructed process, it follows that, for students in the process of learning to write, written comments are liable not to provide a salutary or adequate learning experience for all students simply because, as an instructional practice, they can preclude dynamic interaction between students and their teacher-readers to negotiate both information about

writing and the value systems that influence understanding. That both information and value systems differ not only between students and teachers but also among teachers themselves gives this situation another kind of urgency. Recent research into the consistency among teachers of their editorial markings on student writing found that different teachers often use markedly different language to refer to the same errors on students' papers, and address the same errored writing from a variety of different linguistic angles (Wall & Hull, 1989). That teachers themselves comprise often disparate "interpretive communities" (Wall & Hull, p. 265) is all the more reason for students to have access to contexts in which they can interact with those reading their work. It is on premises such as this that the notion of response has come to be extended beyond the conventional marking of papers to events that invite active processes of negotiation and meaning making.

Response More Broadly Construed

Peer Response Groups

Writing theorists have for many years strongly advocated the use of small peer groups in writing instruction in which the role of the group is to read and respond to each group member's writing. Behind the use of peer-response groups in the classroom is the assumption that peer readers can provide writers with the immediate experience of watching how their writing affects not just one but multiple readers. Two decades ago, Elbow (1973) advocated peer-group response to writing because he felt that such response could constitute an independence from the teacher's authority as arbiter of written text. Elbow believed that profitable peer response to writing should entail peers' expression of their "experience" of the writing as they gave writers "movies of people's minds while they read [writers'] words" (p. 77). Similarly, Macrorie (e.g., 1976) advocated peer-response groups that would respond to the "honesty" or "truth" of a piece of writing, believing that, unlike teachers, peers

could warn one another away from their proclivities for producing "phony" teacher-pleasing text. Advocating peer response that served not to correct papers but to reflect interested readers, Elbow and Macrorie believed that writing fluidity could come only when one disregarded the fear of displeasing the teacher or of erring in mechanics or grammar, a belief held by many researchers and practitioners today based on years of experience in the classroom (on the role of fluidity in early writing development, see Graves, 1983; on fluidity and older writers, see Perl, 1979). Earlier, Moffett had also advocated peer response in an intensive treatment of English curriculum for grades K-12. Moffett recommended "teaching the student to write for the class group," which he described as "the nearest thing to a contemporary world-at-large" (1968, p. 12). These theorists of the "expressivist" school (Fulkerson, 1990) strongly influenced classroom pedagogy in its shift from product to process orientations. One can argue, however, that often tainting this influence was a relaxation of standards, a relaxation born in part of students' taking on what had been traditionally teachers' roles. In the shift, writing pedagogy, moving away from direct instruction, at times fell victim to pedagogical injunctions against any instruction at all in grammar and discourse conventions.[4] Partly in reaction to expressivist pedagogy, some recent criticism has dismissed the "process approach" altogether because it seems neglectful of students on the margins whose very survival depends on their mastery of the mechanics and structures of standard written English (Delpit, 1986).

In spite of the range of ways in which they have been interpreted or misinterpreted, peer-response groups, as Gere (1987) suggests, have nonetheless strong enough theoretical appeal for writing pedagogy to be pursued as methodologically central to the process of learning to write: "Vygotsky's insistence on the dialectic between the individual and society . . . puts peer response at the center of writing because it makes language integral to thinking and knowing" (pp. 83-84). In an extensive review of research on peer-response groups in the writing classroom, DiPardo and Freedman (1988) examined peer response in the context of this theory (with acknowledgment, too, of the complementary theoretical frameworks

of traditional rhetoric, which emphasize the integrity of audience to the writer and writing purpose in the rhetorical act,[5] and cognitive psychology, which in its emphasis on the problem-solving nature of writing looks at audience as one of the major constraints on composing).[6] As the research on peer groups is given a thorough review by DiPardo and Freedman, I wish here simply to highlight and briefly discuss representative research from their review that I believe illustrates the implications for instruction. As these studies have examined groups from elementary school through college in a range of instructional contexts, the caveat that what is true for one age group and context may not be true for another must underlie any interpretation of peer-response group research.

In studies of peer-response groups across elementary, middle, and high school classrooms taught by teachers from the Puget Sound Writing Project, Gere (Gere & Abbott, 1985; Gere & Stevens, 1985) found most of the talk in peer-response groups functioned to tell the writer "how the reader/listener makes meaning with what has been written" (Gere & Stevens, p. 97), the talk having a strong interpretive function. Compared with group talk, teachers' responses were found to be highly generalized ("good organization," "vague and underdeveloped in parts"), a finding that invites comparison to the research on teacher-written response cited earlier. Gere's studies led to the observation that students in groups "informed" one another about the content of writing and the writing process, in contrast to their teachers, who tried to "conform" students to preconceived ideals for written texts. What makes Gere's findings interesting philosophically is that teachers, though Writing Project teachers, nonetheless displayed traditional and conventional teacherly response tendencies when dealing with students' texts; still, their classrooms generally supported meaningful peer-response work as elements of a process approach to writing instruction.

In studies of college freshmen whose writing classes were organized exclusively as group-constituted workshops, Nystrand (1986; Nystrand & Brandt, in press) found that such groups entailed "extensive collaborative problem solving" (Nystrand, 1986, p. 210), creating "an environment somewhat like the social context of initial language

acquisition, where the learner can continuously test hypotheses about the possibilities of written text" (p. 211). Nystrand found that the workshop students, when compared to students in more traditionally organized writing classes, viewed their readers as collaborators rather than judges, conceived of revision as reconceptualization as opposed to mere editing, and saw their texts as the means for balancing their own purposes as writers with the expectations of their readers rather than as products to be judged. According to Nystrand, groups may be regarded as a "formative social arrangement in which writers become consciously aware of the functional significance of composing behaviors, discourse strategies, and elements of text by managing them all in anticipation of continuous reader feedback" (p. 211). Nystrand's findings, too, however, must be viewed in context. His subjects were "average college freshmen," presumably with access to a discourse that allowed them to discuss written language with one another in ways productive in the academy, and groups comprised the sole instructional setting, that is, students had intensive and long-term opportunity to work with one another, in essence gaining practice in group work as much as they gained practice in writing. This practice at group work may, in fact, be critical if groups are to be successful.

In contrast to Nystrand's subjects, peer-response groups at the college level have also been seen as minor disasters when the instructional context did not foster them. Newkirk (1984a, 1984b), examining peer-response groups in college-level writing classes, found that students tolerated written products from their peers that their teachers would not, for example, accepting what teachers would call underdeveloped prose by virtue of "reading into" peers' work structure and content that was not there. Newkirk also found his subjects to indulge their own opinions and idiosyncracies in ways that teachers did not. Unlike Nystrand's subjects, Newkirk's did not exclusively interact in a workshop setting; rather, group work was one element in a broader writing pedagogy. There is some question about how effective this pedagogy was in preparing or motivating helpful peer-response work.

Freedman's (1987, 1992) study of peer-response groups in two ninth-grade English classrooms supports the mismatch of findings reported in other studies. In

her study, Freedman found that group work was constituted paradoxically by superficial exercises as well as meaning-making interactions and that the most collaborative and helpful talk often occurred outside the teacher's stated goals for what group members were to accomplish. For example, often guiding group work for Freedman's subjects were teacher-provided response sheets which students filled in for each group member's writing. Such response sheets are commonly found when teachers organize peer-response groups for writing instruction. Freedman found that students were often more interested in getting through the task of filling in the response sheets, and in ways that they believed the teacher wanted, than in using the sheets as vehicles for genuine response. Yet being in groups nonetheless fostered informal talk that functioned much like the natural feedback that communicators receive in nonschool settings, such as spontaneous and sometimes protracted observations about the content and truth value of peers' writing beyond what the response sheets asked for. The groups in Freedman's study were part of classrooms taught by Bay Area Writing Project teachers who utilized multiple response methods, including whole-class and teacher-student interactions, to teach writing. That is, response to writing was modeled for students in a number of ways as part of the daily routine of learning to write.

One may conclude that, in spite of some negative findings on the effectiveness of peer-response groups in some contexts, the body of research on peer groups generally supports what theory tells us is the value to writing development of interacting with others. More important, the research serves to refine our notions of the function of peer-response groups in the classroom context. As DiPardo and Freedman indicate in their review, it appears that peer groups cannot substitute for either the content or the process of the teacher's own instruction but rather must operate on their own terms; when they do, they can be effective vehicles for collaboration and learning around writing. And peer-response groups work best in classrooms where multiple interactions around writing characterize the entire writing pedagogy.

Teacher-Student Writing Conferences

A teacher-student writing conference is a private conversation between the teacher and student about the student's writing or writing process. As with peer-response groups, the use of such conversations in the teaching of writing has a strong theoretical basis in the work of Vygotsky. Teacher-student writing conferences provide a dialogic context in which the student learning to write may interact intensively with someone who not only serves as a present and responding reader but who, presumably, is a more skillful and experienced reader than any one else in the learning context. That is, teacher-student writing conferences theoretically allow students to work in a "zone of proximal development," defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Vygotsky's conception of student-teacher interaction in the zone of proximal development is parallel to Bruner's (1975, 1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) observation that in guiding the child's acquisition and development of language, adults provide "scaffolds" for children as central to their interactions with them. The metaphor of the scaffold carries with it the characteristics of the familiar structure one sees in building construction which, in providing support, also functions as a tool, extending the range of the worker, allowing the worker to accomplish a task not otherwise possible, and aiding the worker where needed through selective use (Greenfield, 1984). An attractive metaphor for teaching and learning in the area of literacy acquisition, the term "instructional scaffold" has been used to refer to instances when

> the novice reader or writer learns new skills in contexts where more skilled language users provide the support necessary to carry through unfamiliar tasks. In the course of this process, the structure provided

> by the skilled reader or writer is gradually internalized by the novice, who thus eventually learns to carry through similar tasks independently. (Applebee & Langer, 1983, p. 168)

Teacher-student writing conferences have been characterized as prototypically scaffolded events (Graves, 1983; Farr, 1985; Sperling, 1988, 1990a) in which the teacher/reader/responder provides support and structure for the student to lean on, which, when no longer needed, "self destructs."

As an example of scaffolded interaction in the teacher-student writing conference, consider the following writing conference conversation taken from Sperling (1990a) between an English teacher and a ninth-grade student. The student has written a rough draft of a character sketch of her friend Winifred, and the teacher has a conference with the student in class to deliver feedback regarding this draft, feedback that centers on how the student might revise her writing to present a rounded portrait of Winifred that shows both Winifred's serious nature and her light and humorous side.

Teacher: Well. So she's [Winifred] very serious uh--

Student: She *looks* serious.

T: Yeah. She *looks* serious, and on the surface she *acts* serious if she's doing important stuff. Right?

S: Uh huh. She gets her homework done. I mean I ask her, "Oh are you finished?" "Yes I am." I went- "wow!" (laughs)

T: Okay.

S: That's right. We have mostly all our classes together.

T: Uh huh. But. Then she has this other quality of uh--

S: She has a sense of humor. /umhm/ That's right. If you didn't know Winifred, if you just watch her, you'd think she's real serious. You wouldn't think that, you know--

After teacher and student talk for another three minutes, discussing Winifred and the redrafting of the student's character sketch, the conference ends:

T: Okay. So you're gonna write about the way she appeared. The main thing is you gotta write about somehow the way she *appears,* let's say to me, as teacher.

S: Uh huh.

T: And the way she is when you're with her.

S: Yeah, like when we're with friends, /umhm/[7] and stuff like that. (pp. 279-281)

In this conference one may describe as scaffolds the instances in which the teacher (a) creates with the student a description of her friend Winifred: "Well. So she's very serious uh--"; "She *looks* serious, and on the surface she *acts* serious if she's doing important stuff. Right?"; "Yeah, she looks serious, and on the surface she acts serious . . . but then she has this other quality of uh--"; and (b) based on that creation, advises her about what to do next: "Okay. So you're gonna write about the way she appeared. The main thing is you gotta write about somehow the way she *appears,* let's say to me, as teacher." Notably, the student is also doing much of the work of the conversation: "Uh huh. She gets her homework done. I mean I ask her, 'Oh are you finished?' 'Yes I am.' I went--'wow!'"; "That's right. We have mostly all our classes together"; "She has a sense of humor. That's right. If you didn't know Winifred, if you just watch her, you'd think she's real serious. You wouldn't think that--you know--"; "Yeah, like when we're with friends, and stuff like that." That is, the writing conference in this illustration is an interactive event, the "scaffold" working not to do the student's work for her but to extend the student's range in order for her to accomplish a task that she might not, without it, be able to do.[8]

If we perceive, even intuitively, that such interaction has value in the instructional process, then the concept of the teacher as scaffold--and the kinds of

teaching and learning which writing conferences invite--should have bearing on our thinking about the writing conference as a key event in the process of acquiring and developing skill in writing, unique in its wedding of reader/responder and teacher roles.

Writing conferences have been common components in college-level courses such as freshman composition for some time and have been favorably described as opportunities for the teacher to act as listener (Murray, 1979); as chances to evaluate a student's paper with the student present and "captive" to the teacher's remarks (Blenski, 1974), thereby taking the mystery out of the evaluative process for the student (Knapp, 1976); as opportunities to see "minds at work" (Rose, 1982); and for students to learn to talk about writing and for teachers to get involved in the student's entire writing process (Cooper, 1976). These perceptions of the college-level teacher-student writing conference signal them as events in which students undergo a kind of "socialization . . . into interpretive communities of which they are not currently members" (Walters, 1984, p. 3).

While traditionally the province of college instruction, writing conferences are occurring with increasing frequency in elementary school language arts programs, influenced in large measure by the work of Donald Graves (e.g., 1983) and his colleagues at New Hampshire. Graves has trained teachers to participate in teacher-student conferences which engage teachers as active readers of students' evolving texts while at the same time engaging students in active talk about their writing. Graves views such conferences as important enough to children's written language acquisition to be at the heart of this writing program.

Because writing conferences are, in essence, conversations, some of the writing conference research has been strongly influenced by the work of linguists in conversational analysis and by the work of sociolinguists in discourse analysis of conversation. Such analyses have as their premise that conversations are two-sided cooperative events that take shape or direction as they unfold. That is, participants engage in taking turns in an orderly fashion, cooperatively relate the meaning of one turn to that of the next, and systematically relate talk to a shared context (Wells,

1981); and they continuously negotiate meanings and interpretations (Gumperz, 1982). Studies of teacher-student writing conferences that have as their focus their conversational nature ask (a) how conversation is constituted in this particular instructional domain, and (b) how writing conference conversations can be connected to instruction and learning. In essence, research on writing conferences asks how in this particular context writers work in conjunction with a responding and more knowing other in order to improve their writing.

Because writing conferences are typically college-level occurrences, most research on them is focused on the college level as well. For example, in an early study that attempted to uncover the dynamics in conferences that help or fail to help students come to grips with ideas, Jacobs and Karliner (1977) analyzed two writing conferences looking at two different college instructor-student pairs. The "exploratory talk" that they felt both students needed occurred in only one of the conferences, and the researchers believed that the difference between conferences could be attributed to the way the participants perceived their conversational roles. In the conference in which there was no "exploratory talk," the student deferred to the instructor and relinquished the floor to him throughout, both student and teacher observing the formalities of classroom exchange; in the other conference, the student talked interchangeably with the instructor, more as one does in spontaneous conversation, and it was this student who made high-level revisions in her next essay as opposed to "patching up" her rough draft. One major question that such research raises is whether, ipso facto, the better student writer would also be a better conference participant. Yet, the researchers' observation that the teacher-student conference falls as discourse somewhere between classroom discussion and casual conversation and can draw its rules from either or both, depending on the participants, is important theoretically and practically (on this point, see Freedman & Katz, 1987). They suggest that the more "conversational" the conference, the more valuable it is for the student. Although their analysis allowed them to question how different interaction "styles" affected dyadic instruction as students learned to write, conclusions were drawn from a sample of two conferences and without reference to

the rest of the classroom context from which the conferences developed. Yet this early study implicitly suggested the important role reciprocity plays in teacher-student writing conference conversations, a characteristic that subsequent research has supported and developed more thoroughly (e.g., Florio-Ruane, 1986; Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Walker & Elias, 1987; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989).

Much of what we know about the college-level writing conference comes from Freedman's research (1979, 1980, 1981; Freedman & Katz, 1987; Freedman & Sperling, 1985), which is modeled on ethnographic inquiry and which looks closely at the elements of conference interaction in the broader context of classroom, teacher, and student background. Freedman and colleagues followed a "best case" approach in case studies of a writing instructor identified as excellent by colleagues and students, in order to study multiple conference interactions over time. Over the course of one semester, Freedman and colleagues compared the instructor's conferences with lower-achieving and higher-achieving students. They analyzed such discourse features as topic of conversation, topic shifts, the way topics were initiated and continued, and who in the conferences contributed what. They also looked at request forms, greetings, and closings. Freedman found that the conference presented an opportune time for both lower- and higher-achieving students to discuss what was on their minds, an opportunity for all the students to repeat their concerns about writing over and over to their instructor. Put another way, conferences offered a vehicle for the students to get repeated feedback from the instructor on the writing and writing processes that most concerned them. Freedman found, too, that participants' concerns changed over the course of the semester, coming to parallel the teacher's concerns for their writing. Such parallel concerns made for more comfortable conference conversations, more rhythmic conversational flow, in which the teacher devoted more time to responding to and developing the students' ideas. Like peer-response work, it appears that writing conference interaction "improves" with practice and that writing conferences are more beneficial when they are regularly occurring and continuous events built into the broader instructional process.

Because writing conferences occur rarely at the high school level (see Sperling,

1992) high school writing conferences have been studied very little. However, a recent study by Sperling (1988, 1990a, 1991, in press) of one high school English class in which writing conferences were regular occurrences sheds light on the conference process for young adolescents. Sperling combined ethnographic methodology with fine-grained discourse analysis to study and analyze the writing conference conversations between one teacher and six case study students over the course of a six-week period. The students represented a range of abilities in that classroom. In analyzing the ways in which conference participants raised and sustained topics in conversation and the ways in which they structured conversational moves (asking and answering questions, offering and accepting information, for example), Sperling found that the conferences for all six students were collaborative events resembling casual conversation in which both participants could shape and direct discourse, even though the teacher tended to direct the discourse more than the students. She found that all students were on occasion more active participants in conference conversation with the teacher, depending on several factors: the instructional purpose of the conference, the duration of the conference, and the place of the conference in the sequence of writing tasks across the six weeks. Sperling observed that (a) collaboration occurred on a continuum both across and among students, (b) for all students, conversational ends and instructional ends merged in the service of these students learning to write, and (c) it was the multiplicity of conferences that allowed different students to flourish at different times as active participants in conference talk. Results were generally positive that conferences were unique and salutary concomitants to the writing process. To put perspective on these findings, one must place them in the broader instructional context of the classroom under study: conferences occurred as part of other response activities such as peer-group work and whole-class discussion as well as teacher-written comments in a classroom where individual students' writing processes were highly valued.

Not surprisingly, conferences constituted by instructionally disturbing interactions appear situated in classrooms that themselves preclude a socially based approach to writing development and where there may be mixed messages as to the

theoretical underpinnings of instruction. In a study of the writing conferences of two sixth-grade classrooms, for example, Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989) suggest that what motivated the work of the conferences they observed was the teacher's desire to make specific corrections and improvements on students' texts and that in the "game" of displaying shared knowledge, the writing conferences looked like all the other teaching-learning events in the classroom. Considering the instructional context in which these conferences took place, an urban school district with institutionalized concerns for correctness as well as other typical urban pressures, the researchers concluded that the writing conferences could not help but reproduce established patterns of teaching and learning and therefore fail to deliver the promise they have been said to hold. Florio-Ruane (1986) drew a similar conclusion in a study of preservice teachers in writing conferences with elementary school students. The teachers that she observed had to deal with instructional "agendas" imposed from the school district, had only brief periods of contact with their students each day, did not necessarily expect competence from their students, and were unlikely to follow a student's lead in conversation. The writing conferences were, for the novice teachers Florio-Ruane worked with, either empty rituals or occasions for editing students' texts. On the basis of her study, Florio-Ruane questions the applicability to the classroom of a dialogic model of language development. To move beyond this conclusion, we may need to pose a more overriding question, concerning how elements of classroom instruction, such as the teacher-student writing conference, need to match with the assumptions made of teaching and learning writing in the broader classroom context. What is evident from most of the research on teacher-student writing conferences is that they are critical dialogic events that promote the construction of the content and structure of written text, but they can function as such only in classrooms that support the socially based theoretical and pedagogical assumptions behind them.

Response Construed Large: Classroom Practice that Expands the Boundaries of Readership

If we assume that, as theory suggests, writers write in anticipation of their readers' expectations, then good instructional practice will expand the boundaries within which writers in school may anticipate their readers, thus expanding the boundaries within which, theoretically, these writers may engage with both anticipated and received response to their texts. Good practice, that is, will capitalize broadly on the social interaction that underlies written communication, construing for "response" both proactive and reactive meanings.

A growing body of research investigates various classroom practices that exploit the social nature of written language and its development and that suggest rich and varied ways that practice may be directed. The research both examines existing classroom practices and orchestrates new classroom practices for the purpose of study. Taken together, these studies suggest how classroom practices may profitably develop student writers' anticipation of readership by inserting response--construed large--into the whole of the writing process. The practices have in common (a) the overriding purpose of connecting students with a readership other than the "teacher-as-examiner," thereby developing and focusing students' sensitivities to the multiple exigencies of written communication, and (b) the underlying understanding that children bring to the classroom the ability not only to make meaning with interlocutors but to strategize ways to make meaning clear (Staton & Shuy, 1988). That is, children bring to the classroom a natural communicative competence born of the spoken interactions with others, interactions that have, for the better part of their young lives, constituted valid communication. These practices have not only added to but have also validated theories of how written language may best develop in the context of the classroom.

Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journals are texts in which teacher and student converse with one another

in writing, communicating back and forth, usually over the course of a semester. Dialogue journals are characteristically free from formal structures (such as the salutations that mark letter writing) and draw on both oral and written language features (dashes or ellipses, for example, used to indicate pausing are written features often found in dialogue journals that reflect, in this context, the cadence of speech more than they do grammatical structure [see Chafe, 1987]). Most critically, the conditions of writing in dialogue journals parallel the interpersonal and functional conditions of speaking and so set up expectations in writers for the expectations of their interlocutors. According to Staton and Shuy (1988), in dialogue journals,

> The meaning of the learner's utterance is supported by the context--[that is,] setting, participants, prior events, topic frames are present or at least known to the participants. A real audience in the use of language exists, known to the speaker and in need of hearing what the speaker has to say. Meaning is interactively negotiated between speakers over time, with ample opportunities for feedback, clarification, and elaboration of points. There is ample access to experienced speakers so that the learner can acquire models for how to understand and represent events and how to get things done using language in this particular language and culture. The communication is generally functional or purposeful. . . . The focus of communication is on meaning and message . . . . (pp. 198-199)

Dialogue journals, then, wed quite naturally the acts of writing with reading as both teacher and student assume interactively both writer and reader roles.

Staton and Shuy (1988; Shuy, 1986; Staton, 1985; Staton, Shuy, Kreeft, & Reed, 1987) have conducted extensive studies in the use of dialogue journals both in elementary and secondary schools on the assumption that "there are instances in which the child's natural communicative competence can be built into reading/writing activities" (1988, p. 196). Examining the use of dialogue journals by

hundreds of students, both mainstream and nonmainstream (including deaf students and ESL students), the researchers have found dialogue journal communication to differ significantly and importantly from standard classroom interaction. They have found, for example, that students ask twice the number of questions in dialogue journals that they do in classroom talk, express personal facts and opinions 50 percent as opposed to 10 percent of the time, and engage in such critical skills as predicting and evaluating 19 percent of the time as opposed to 3 percent. The researchers have also found that in dialogue journals, teachers significantly reduce the percentage of time they ask questions, increase the amount of time they state personal facts and opinions, reduce the amount of time they evaluate, and reduce warnings and directives. While in dialogue journals teachers do not explicitly correct students' written "errors" (such correcting is not the purpose of these journals), students' written language nonetheless is shown to come increasingly closer to standard forms as it is shaped by teachers' modeling of spellings, usage, and other linguistic devices. As with other instructional activities that engage teacher with student in nontraditional ways (as Staton and Shuy point out, in dialogue journals teachers are not correcting or lecturing), the use of dialogue journals enlarges the definition of teaching as, over time, teachers model and scaffold written language in a relatively natural and self-generated context.

Cross-Classroom Writing Exchanges: Letters

Like the writing of dialogue journals, letter writing is highly interpersonal and is contextualized in the relatively immediate worlds of both writer and reader. Like dialogue journals, informal letters draw noticeably on linguistic characteristics from both oral and written language, often incorporating, for example, the informal vocabulary and stream-of-thought organization more typical of conversation, along with the embedded syntax and integrative lexicon more typical of written language (on oral and written language features, see Chafe & Danielewicz, 1987). Unlike dialogue journals, letters are constrained by certain formalities, entailing dates,

salutations, and closings, for example. When letter writers are members of the same family, or when they are friends or acquaintances, they may anticipate with relative ease one another's tolerances for and reactions to the structure and substance of their communicative messages, for they share often tacit assumptions about the ways in which communication works in the context of their own relationship. When letter writers do not know one another, pen pals, for example, anticipations of and expectations for structure and substance may need to take shape over time as reader tolerance and reaction are both explicitly and implicitly negotiated through the letters themselves. That standard linguistic conventions can take shape during writing rather than prior to writing is particularly critical for writers with little initial practice in the standard linguistic conventions and forms of written language--it must be remembered that drill and practice in standard grammar and usage, with which basic writers often have a superfluity of practice, has been seen to have little carry-over to the context-bound writing of extended discourse.

Studies of letter writing in the school context, in investigating the processes through which both the structure and substance of letters take shape, have analyzed the ways in which this shaping process promotes written language development among a diversity of students. In one study, Heath and Branscombe (1985) examined the letter writing that took place over the course of a year in Branscombe's ninth-grade basic English class. The class was composed of fourteen black and four white students, most of whom had previously been in special education classes that used remedial techniques for teaching reading and language. Most of the students had never written more than a sequence of a few words, and only three had ever read through an entire book. Each student was paired with a twelfth grader from a "regular track" English class with whom to correspond, and, additionally, each student corresponded with Heath in California. Heath and Branscombe found increasing evidence in the ninth graders' letters that, over time, the students were envisioning the audience of their writing and accommodating their writing to their audience. Also, in the course of writing letters over time, students developed metalinguistic awareness as well as awareness of "the limits and possibilities of writing as compared

with speaking" (p. 17). Most evidence for these developments was garnered from the written texts themselves, in which there was an increase in length, use of format features (greetings, closings), idea initiations, types of conjunctions, and metalinguistic comments. These evolving texts were shaped in part by the upperclassmen's explicit requests in their own letters for clarification or explanation of the younger students' letters and in part through the ninth graders' developing hypotheses about the structure and function of written language as they read the written discourse of their older correspondents. As Heath and Branscombe emphatically state, the increases in syntactic complexity and decentered prose came not through teacher-directed revisions but "through 'natural' needs that evolved as the ninth graders developed more topics on which they wanted to share information with the upperclassmen and as they became more inquisitive about how the upperclassmen felt about issues and ideas" (p. 18). Students who had begun the school year with writing experience limited to little more than filling in blanks on worksheets ended with their writing not only detailed letters to their older peers but also sustained essays to Heath about themselves and their families that ranged from three to ten pages in length. It can be argued that the opportunity for students to work in such a "best of circumstances" context, that is, the opportunity to work as part of an informed teacher and researcher collaboration that closely guided the events of a full school year, is neither usual nor easily replicated in its original design. It is difficult to argue, however, with the critical assumption that both underlies and gains further support from this research--that there is a strong need to take mechanistic techniques out of the writing curriculum for students designated "remedial" and to allow such students to engage over time in purposeful and extended discourse that, for the students themselves, has social currency.[9] Such a context for writing promotes the writer's sense of herself as a user of written language while at the same time it develops the writer's sense of the absent other in ways that more conventional school writing assignments cannot begin to accomplish.

Taking the idea of a writing exchange across both cultural and national boundaries, Freedman and McLeod (Freedman, 1989; Freedman & McLeod, 1988, 1991; see, too, Cone, 1989; Reed 1989), in a long-term cross-cultural comparison of writing instruction in the United States and the United Kingdom, paired four urban classrooms in California with four in the United Kingdom and examined the writing and instruction that occurred as students in the classroom pairs exchanged, over the course of one year, not only letters but other types of writing as well. According to the researchers, "the main academic business of the exchanges was to provide an occasion for students in the two countries to write substantial and committed pieces for a distant and real audience: autobiographies, books about their schools and their communities, fiction and poetry, pieces about books they had read, essays about important and often controversial issues" (p. 12). Students in all classrooms were ethnically and culturally mixed, with most classrooms composed primarily of ethnic minority students and, in the United Kingdom, bilingual students as well. Two of the classrooms were composed solely of at-risk students. In a series of descriptive case analyses of the four classroom pairs, Freedman and McLeod found that student literacy was best served in those classrooms in which the writing exchanges integrated into the many different types of writing students' "broader social needs . . . with their academic needs" (p. 6). That is, the student writers were best served when writing became a vehicle through which students could "gain status with their peers" when they wrote in ways that "allow(ed) them to be 'recognized' by students in the other country" (p. 261). In these classrooms, it was found that students' writing developed as a direct concommitant to this social element: "They (the American students) see the students in England as friends, and they work hard to develop personal voices and create writing personas so that they can present themselves appealingly. They want to be liked and respected by the British group in the same way that they want to be liked and respected by their classmates" (p. 263). The researchers found that when writing exchanges worked, they furthermore served as vehicles through which

students could see themselves as members of a social group that included the classroom community. Yet such outcomes were not automatic to the exchanges. Classroom contexts both in the United States and the United Kingdom had to be supportive of the exchanges, and the exchanges had to be central to the classroom curriculum in order to function at their best. Not all paired classrooms were equally successful in achieving this end, a problem that the researchers attributed to a number of internal and external constraints, including paired teachers' sometimes contradictory expectations for the writing activities and the fact that outside examinations in the United Kingdom often demanded class time and attention that had to be diverted from the exchanges. While in the best cases, then, development was seen in both writers and writing (best cases included classrooms of at-risk students), it took sometimes masterful organization and design among both researchers and teachers for the writing exchanges to achieve full success as teachers could accommodate the writing exchanges to their individual classroom needs. In spite of the inherent difficulties of implementing such a cross-cultural exchange, however, the research supports and extends the theoretical assumption that when the contexts for writing development wed the social and the academic in ways that are mutually supportive, writing and literacy become appealing vehicles by which students may function as members of a valued community.

Cross-Age Tutoring

Cross-age tutoring, as the name suggests, pairs students of different ages in a one-to-one tutorial, older students teaching younger and in the process learning themselves. Several cross-age tutoring projects exist across the country, many of which are the outgrowths of a project in South Carolina funded by the Bread Loaf School of English for students labeled "at risk" (Hoffman & Heath, 1986). Cross-age tutoring adds the processes of speaking to those of reading and writing as older and younger student pairs work together in the service of the younger student's accomplishing a learning task. That is, in cross-age tutoring, reading and writing are socially

negotiated as student pairs work in collaboration, and reading and writing are the means toward an end rather than being ends in themselves. For example, students might work on a chemistry experiment, with reading and writing developing around the needs of the experiment--the writing and reading of field notes, for instance. As with the other practices described in this section, characteristic and apparently key to the development of reading and writing skills in cross-age tutoring is that the tutoring context--interactive and constructive--mitigates against reductive, mechanistic approaches to learning.

Stuckey & Alston (1990) describe five cross-age tutoring projects spawned by Bread Loaf, all involving tutors and tutees both labeled "at risk," all children of poverty, most of them black. Projects paired sixth graders with first graders, fourth graders with first graders, ninth through twelfth graders with sixth graders, college students with a range of elementary students, and college students with ninth graders. Stuckey and Alston observe that in all projects a critical element was that students were "asked to do what their more privileged peers routinely do . . . to speak, to think, to plan, to collaborate . . . to evaluate" (p. 250). At the end of the first year of one project, "students improved on a state-mandated standardized test more than any other group in the school" (p. 251); at the end of the second year in that project, all students tested out of remedial reading classes and the college-age tutors passed a state-mandated teachers' exam, an unprecedented event for this population of students. Other data were equally positive. As these projects are ongoing, data continue to be analyzed. It is evident, however, that in such reading and writing interactions, unencountered in traditional practices aimed at remediation, literacy development among both tutors and tutees derived at least in part from opportunities in the tutoring context for interpreting, explaining, casting and recasting the tasks at hand such that failed attempts were challenges to learning, challenges to arrive at agreed-upon meanings between participants, rather than occasions for reinforcing past failures.

In the broadest sense of the word, "collaboration" occurs whenever writers write (see, e.g., Witte, 1991). The very acts of looking up information in a resource book, of testing out ideas with others--indeed, the act of using language--involve implicit collaboration at some level. Most commonly, however, the term collaboration refers to the situation that finds two or more writers working together deliberately to produce a single text. Such collaboration in schools is relatively rare (see Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Reither & Vipond, 1989), largely because schools have traditionally valued the individually produced over the collaboratively produced text, on the grounds that writing with someone else is tantamount to cheating. Research on text collaboration in school is, as is student text collaboration itself, scant; yet from what little research there is, it is fair to speculate that few other activities can involve individuals more closely in negotiation as both writers and readers, or in more explicitly ongoing exchanges of writer and reader/responder roles, than that of collaborators working together to seek after, express, and clarify a unified message.

In extensive studies of elementary school students writing collaboratively, in pairs, at the computer, Daiute (e.g., Daiute, 1989; Daiute & Dalton, 1988) found that such collaborations offered students occasions for subtle negotiations and language play and that these activities were key to the development of individual students' writing abilities. In one study, Daiute analyzed the talk of fourth- and fifth-grade co-authors in collaborative composing sessions to discover whether collaboration led to increases in students' explicit planning and analysis activities. Daiute found that, in fact, for students whose writing improved after collaborating, there was little explicit planning and analysis--a finding that, as Daiute points out, contradicts adult models of "expert" composing (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981), but that through language play such as exchanging sound alliterations, exchanging word associations, and mutually devising and revising story plots, children modeled for one another and implicitly negotiated with one another the structure and content of their texts. These processes occurred as the students playfully tested and suggested alternatives for writing,

monitored and clarified form, monitored punctuation, evaluated and explained their individual text contributions, checked facts, and expressed the rhetorical value of their writing. Improvement was greatest for individuals whose earlier writing was scored holistically lower than for individuals whose writing had initially higher scores, suggesting the value of such collaboration for weaker writers. As this study was conducted in suburban schools, it is not clear that such language play as seen among these student pairs is also common among diverse students from different backgrounds who have real difficulties in school, or whether such language play, even if common among diverse students, supports written discourse as it did for the students that Daiute studied. The study does support, however, others' observations (e.g., Dyson, 1989) regarding the intricate tie between social talk and writing, and it supports the related assumption based in cognitive-process research that one's sense of audience evolves throughout the composing process itself. The research suggests that such an evolving sense can be assisted pedagogically when opportunities for interaction with another writer/reader occur throughout the process. The research is corroborated, too, by studies of collaborative writing in the workplace, where, unlike school, collaborations on a single text are routine. Such workplace studies show that (a) a writer's sense of audience "evolves" throughout the process of producing a text and (b) this sense of audience is greatly facilitated by the collaborative work itself as writers are seen to use one another throughout the writing process to construct and refine their sense of text, audience, and audience-directed composing (see, e.g., Odell & Goswami, 1982; Witte, 1991).[10]

While studies of fully realized co-authoring, in which students collaborate on a text from start to finish, are scarce, current studies looking at collaboration on subparts of composing are steadily emerging, in part because classrooms that invite process approaches to teaching writing involve, sometimes unwittingly, "partial" collaborations throughout the writing process--indeed, peer response groups and teacher-student conferences are instances of such partial collaborations and have been studied for their collaborative characteristics (see, e.g., Sperling, in press). Recently, in a series of studies that orchestrate collaborations in order to study them,

Flower and her colleagues (e.g., Higgins, Flower, & Petraglia, 1992) have been looking closely at the cognitive processes entailed in "collaborative planning," as individual authors collaborate with peers to make and revise plans for their own texts. These studies stem from the extensive earlier research conducted by Flower and others investigating composing processes as individual writers work alone, and the research has roots in the problem-solving studies of cognitive psychology. One study involves twenty-two college freshmen from two freshman composition courses. Students in this study were asked write a short paper based on a reading assignment, and the researchers examined taped conversations that took place when these students met outside of class with a partner of their own choice for a collaborative planning session on their writing. The study included training students in methods of collaborative planning, a process whereby, in pairs, writers explain their plans for their writing to listeners who in turn offer a set of rhetorical prompts to help the writers plan the text. Preliminary analysis of selected transcripts shows collaborative planning to be constituted in part by partners' active negotiation of the social context of their writing and by their challenging or changing their representations of both their task and their texts throughout the planning process. In addition, the researchers have found that those elements of students' plans that come under most direct scrutiny in the collaborative planning sessions showed up in significant parts of the final text, such as the introduction, conclusion, or major examples. The researchers found that different students used collaborative planning in significantly different ways not explained by student ability but apparently reflecting the goals, strategies, and awareness that students brought to the planning sessions. In examinations of selected students' collaborative planning sessions, the researchers conclude that, among other things, collaborative planning helped these students anticipate readers' responses.

This research raises critical questions for practice as well as for further research. How, for example, might such collaborations take shape were students trained differently or were they to work with teachers rather than peers (questions that Flower and her colleagues raise themselves). Could such collaborative planning

sessions be used with younger students, with students with limited English proficiency, with students unaccustomed to writing extended discourse? Do such planning sessions hinder rather than help the writing process of different students? Given, however, the penchant in schools to devalue full collaboration, such research points towards possible avenues to explore for "partial collaborations" to occur in service of students learning to write, avenues that go beyond peer response groups or teacher-student writing conferences.

Instruction based on the kinds of activities discussed in this section emphasizes the functional and contextualized nature of communication and tends to deemphasize the mechanistic learning of discrete reading and writing skills. Beleaguering the widespread implementation of such instruction in actual classrooms is, at least in part, the apparently institutionalized fear that deemphasis of direct instruction of mechanical and rhetorical skills renders a disservice to children who, for a variety of reasons, may not have acquired all the "basics" of written language, including students who are at risk of school failure. The purpose of this paper has been, in part, to counter such fear. In closing, the following section presents some ideas about the ways in which the research summarized here, and the theory on which it is based, is linked to a range of classrooms serving a range of students.

Putting Theory into Practice

A core of concepts regarding writing and writing instruction emerges from this summary review of research on the social nature of writing. The concepts complement a variety of socially based classroom practices. Notably, such practices cut across age levels and content areas, taking as a premise that social interaction characterizes individuals' experiences with all written language, and such interaction is the thread that pulls literacy through the whole of childhood and adulthood as well.

In this section, as I list, separately, this core of concepts, it should be readily

apparent that they are, in fact, interconnected and mutually supporting; that is, each concept implicates and is implicated in the others. Indeed, it is only for the purpose of explication that they are here teased apart.

1. Writing Is a Socially Derived Act

Individuals' conceptions of writing derive from their witnessing writing in action in the world around them and formulating guesses about its function, its uses, and its value to the culture in which they are participating. This dynamic puts instructional priority on classroom practices that not only model but draw attention to those writing practices that have value in the school culture. For example, it has long been a tenet of the National Writing Project that teachers write along with their students, modeling for their students the processes of finding and developing thoughts through written language. Regarding the idea of teachers writing as well as their students, Britton (1989) asserts that "teaching and learning are not truly interactive if the teacher plays only from the touchline [sidelines]" (p. 235). When teachers and others model the culture's writing practices, they do more than just model the cognitive struggle. They model, too, the social act of communicating through written language and the value of that form of communication in relation to other forms. In addition to encouraging teachers to write along with their students, writing programs can involve teachers as well as others in written communication to students: notes, cards, letters, memos, stories--the range of writing is open for such communicative modeling.

2. Writing Has Links to Someone Else's Understanding

Knowing that writing does not occur in a social vacuum, that the anticipation of readership is an essential element when writers write, instructional priorities are given to classroom practices that encourage students to engage frequently in producing texts that can benefit others--for example, writing that conveys important messages; explains procedures that others need to follow; informs others about current events, activities, interests, or issues that they should be aware of in order to act or to make decisions. Such intentional writing can take place as classroom assignments (as occurs with Branscombe's cross-age letter writing). But such writing

can also be built into the classroom's or school's everyday functioning as students are guided toward utilizing a writing component in conveying personal, social, and academic concerns. Drawing up class rules, putting suggestions, confusions, or complaints in writing to teachers or administrators, writing memos to solidify school or classroom projects, or translating one language into another for parents or friends are a few examples.

3. Writing Is a Means to an End, Not Just an End in Itself

This concept yields instructional practices closely related to those mentioned above. Writing programs, for example, include projects across the curriculum that depend on writing for their completion. Examples are science projects that depend on students' lab notes; plays, slide-tapes, or video projects that depend on students' written scripts and directions; math assignments that depend on students' writing of word problems for other students to solve; or social studies research that depends on students' written interview data. For young children, writing can be invited into the settings of pretend play, with pencils and paper keeping company with toys and dolls.

4. Writing Is Fed and Nourished in Interaction with Others

Community standards for writing develop and take shape in the interactions that unfold among community members. Conversely, individuals discover community standards for writing by participating as members in the community context. Friends whose letters are answered, community newsletter contributors whose announcements get published, academics whose grant proposals are funded, fiction writers whose mature works sell better than their neophyte attempts--all are active participants in the community that shapes and is shaped by their writing. Such interactive contexts for written language use are exemplified in school settings in Dyson's studies of early elementary students testing the structural and topical boundaries of their written texts in social interactions with their peers; in Heath's studies of remedial students exchanging letters with upperclassmen; and in Nystrand's studies of college students negotiating writing standards in peer group-structured workshops. Writing programs create such participatory writing contexts by giving priority to practices that promote student-student and teacher-student interaction throughout the writing process.

Expanding the interactive group to include other classrooms, other teachers, administrators, parents, and others further enriches the discourse community in which students can participate. At least three major assumptions underlie such practices. The first is that writing often takes time and that critical to writing is reshaping and revising. The second is that there is no single right way to write anything; readers may have different ideas about how best to execute a text, and writers' ideas will change with time and circumstance. The third is that writers themselves take shape over time in a social context. In interaction with multiple others, then, students can discover both the socially negotiated nature of writing and an approach to completing the text at hand.

Writing programs that take the above core concepts as foundations to inform classroom practices invite teachers to rethink the learning of educational "outcomes" such as the ability to use standard grammar and usage or the ability to write an expository essay. The teaching of discrete skills, both mechanical and rhetorical, as well as the evaluation and testing of writing ability, remain critical elements of instruction, but they become incorporated into a socially based instructional framework. Grammar and usage, for example, are taught in a context of communicative need, as certain texts and contexts motivate the use of such written elements as quotation marks, indenting, and punctuation (see Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1983). Evaluation techniques account for the social contexts of writing, incorporating, for example, the use of writing portfolios that represent student writing over time, or multiple drafts of writing, or writing across subject areas, or reflections about writing along with the writing itself (see Camp, 1990; Murphy & Smith, 1990).

A Final Word

The main goal of writing instruction is, by many accounts, to make students "insiders" in the schools' discourse communities. Socially based writing instruction, which both

reflects and enlightens socially based theoretical conceptions of composing and of text, offers substance as well as hope as students negotiate such discourse communities.

Notes

1. What often distinguishes fiction from nonfiction is the author's *fictive assumption* of shared knowledge with a reader. "Monday is no different from any other weekday in Jefferson now," the opening line of Faulkner's "That Evening Sun," assumes before a story even unfolds that writer and reader "share" knowledge that (a) Jefferson is a place and (b) at one time Monday *was* different from other weekdays there.

2. Ede and Lunsford (1984), in discussing the writer-audience relationship, assert that the composing process includes both "addressing" readers, that is, envisioning real people to direct messages to, and "invoking" readers, that is, creating fictional readers to direct messages to. That is, they assert that composing is an interplay of both invoking and addressing one's reading audience.

3. The illness metaphor that describes this relationship among teacher, student, and written product and that has dictated the extensive use of red ink carries deeply rooted professional sanction. What has trickled down to relatively recent times is an "ideal" reading of student writing in which the teacher reads each student paper and marks all "formal errors," so that in the course of a school year a writer can "examine and correct his worst faults one by one" (from CEEB, 1963, p. 99, cited in Sperling, 1984).

4. This pedagogical stance was and still is also heavily influenced by decades of research indicating that formal instruction in grammar has no positive influence on student writing. Suffice it to say here that some of this research methodology has been questioned and found wanting, and that the negative correlations found between grammar instruction and writing skill in many of these studies may be due in large part to the fact that in classes where grammar is a focus, other writing instruction and actual practice in writing are often displaced. What may be concluded from these studies is that grammar instruction alone does not a writer make. For perspective on the teaching of grammar and writing instruction, see Hartwell, 1985.

5. In part because composition studies stem largely from the discipline of rhetoric, the role of audience in composing has been the focus of numerous empirical studies of writing, many of them following an experimental paradigm. Studies manipulating audience specification abound (e.g., Beach & Liebman-Klein, 1986; Black, 1989; Hays, Brandt, & Chantry, 1988; Kroll, 1984; Odoroff, 1987; Rafoth, 1985; Redd-Boyd & Slater, 1989; Rubin & Rafoth, 1986). One may conclude that, in general, real audiences affect writers' composing more than do imaginary audiences and more than no audience specification at all; teacher-as-audience has less effect on writing than do audiences other than the teacher; writing that reveals "audience adaptation" generally is perceived to be of higher quality than writing that does not adapt for audience; and proficient writers include more adaptations than nonproficient writers (see endnote 6).

6. Seminal studies comparing novice and expert writers' cognitive processes (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1980, 1981) find that good writers consistently show significantly greater concern about audience than do poor writers. For example, in the process of composing, good writers reexamine their own evolving texts as well as the writing assignment they are addressing in order to add to their image of audience, and in the process of writing they often build progressive representations of their readers, spending much time thinking about how they want to affect these readers. In a study limited to examining the writing strategies of basic writers, that is, college level students who write at severely remedial levels, McCutcheon, Hull, and Smith (1987) found that these students employed two different writing strategies, consulting of grammatical rules and editing for "sound of text." Editing for sound proved the more effective strategy, suggesting that the students who chose this strategy incorporated into their composing processes sensitivities to the "ear" of their eventual readers, as do more advanced writers.

7. In this transcription, words between slashes indicate the listener's insertion of utterances that serve to move the conversation along--e.g., uh huh, yeah, hm; linguists call such utterances backchannel cues.

8. Because the scaffold metaphor feels so one-sided, inviting us to ignore the integral role of both participants of the dyad, it has been criticized as misleading (see, e.g., Cazden, 1983; Sperling, 1990a). Nonetheless, it is widely used both by researchers and practitioners to refer to the kinds of instructional interactions just described, and so I use it, too, assuming interactive intent.

9. A number of accounts by teachers and others about classroom successes with remedial students' writing support this cry for nonmechanistic approaches to teaching

writing. See, for example, articles in journals of the National Council of Teachers of English, e.g., *English Journal* and *Language Arts.* The burgeoning evidence from teacher-research studies, too, corroborates this observation. See, e.g., "The Unteachables" by Jane Juska (*The Quarterly, 11* [1], 1989).

10. This stance runs counter to the traditional rhetorical approach to writing instruction which emphasizes a writer's knowing her audience in advance of writing by *envisioning* it through the use of heuristics. The rhetorical model has been criticized for promoting audience as static (see also Park, 1982; Roth, 1987), rather than as an inextricable yet ever-changing component of the composing process itself.

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